

CONSTRAINTS OF CROP DIVERSIFICATION IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture continues to be the most predominant sector of the state economy, as 70 percent of the population is engaged in Agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. The State has an area of 1.3 Lakh sq.km with a gross cropped area of around 63 Lakh Ha. Constraints always play a significant role and it hinders the farmers from practicing crop diversification. The present study was conducted in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, which aimed to collect the constraints encountered by the farmers practicing crop diversification and suitable strategies to overcome from it. Middle men intervention is the major constraint encountered by the farmers and they all suggested that providing Minimum Support Price to agricultural commodities will serve as a viable strategy to improve crop diversification.

Objectives

- To find out the constraints associated with crop diversification.
- To suggest a suitable strategy for better crop diversification.

KEYWORDS: Crop Diversification, Constraints & Suggestions

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INTRODUCTION

Tirunelveli district has a total geographical area of 6,75,850 ha. The total cropped area was 2,06,858 ha (30.61 per cent) and the net area sown was 1,75,087 ha (25.91 per cent). Being predominantly an agricultural district, crop diversification is largely dependent on the socio-economic, environment conditions and technological development of the region. Crop diversification is the product of action, reaction, interaction among the physical and non-physical environment (Sohal, 2003). Crop diversification is a shift from traditionally grown less remunerative crops to more remunerative crops. It is considered as an important tool to maximize the land use, water and other resources and for the overall agricultural development in the country. But the farmers are facing a lot of problems in practicing crop diversification. Identifying the constraints will help to frame suitable strategies to overcome the problems. Hence, a study was conducted in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu with the purpose of identifying the constraints faced by the farmers in practicing crop diversification and provide suitable suggestions to overcome those constraints.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tirath *et al.* (2015) stated that non-availability of labour, credit and other inputs on time were found to be the constraints in crop diversification and also found that marketing related problems were found to affect the diversification process.

Adjimotiet *al.* (2017) reported that to manage risk and uncertainty, there is a need to rethink the input policies and found that fertilizer availability and seed accessibility to farmers were the great opportunity and access to those inputs were the major agricultural constraints.

Khalid (2016) reported that market opportunities and rational policies are the major constraints faced by the farmers regarding crop diversification.

Choet *al.* (2016) reported that to increase in crop outputs and food security, the farmers should be encouraged to improve the right selection and cultivation of different crop types on their farms.

Basavarajet *al.* (2016) concluded that conducting and intensifying the role of extension service providers, promote research based recommendations and technologies on the farm and it would strengthen the crop diversification process in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on the primary data collected from the selected respondents. Tirunelveli district was purposively selected for this study. Of the nineteen blocks, three blocks having maximum Groundnut crop area coverage were selected for the study. Two villages from each block having maximum Groundnut crop area coverage were selected for the study. A sample size of 120 farmers was fixed as respondents. The 120 respondents were identified from the selected six villages from three blocks by applying the proportionate random sampling method.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Constraints Associated with Crop Diversification

Identifying the constraints faced in crop diversification is the first step to solve the problems faced by the farmers. Ten constraints were identified in the study area and it was ranked based on the responses. It projected the field level problems faced by the respondents. The details of the constraints encountered by the diversified growers were analyzed and ranked based on percentage and arranged in the table.

Table 1: Constraints Faced by the Farmers Practicing Crop Diversification

S. No	Constraints	Number*	Percentage	Rank
1.	Middle men intervention	98	81.60	I
2.	Forest animals problem	90	75.00	II
3.	Inadequate credit / subsidy facilities	89	74.10	III
4.	Inadequate transport facilities	88	73.30	IV
5.	Lack of marketing channels	64	53.30	V
6.	Lack of fixed price to the crops grown	62	51.60	VI
7.	Poor economic status	55	45.80	VII
8.	Incidence of pests and diseases	53	44.10	VIII
9.	Low yield due to climate change	42	35.00	IX
10.	Lack of awareness on Government schemes and policies	32	26.60	X

*- Multiple responses

It could be seen from the table that 81.60 per cent of the respondents stated that middle men intervention was the major constraint encountered by the farmers. The reason for dependence on the intermediaries is due to the fact that most of the farmers are small and marginal farmers and also the distance of the market from the fields which requires high transport charges. It was followed by 75.00 per cent of the respondents who stated that wild birds and forest animals caused damage to the crops and was stated as a major problem. Inadequate credit / subsidy facilities was reported by 74.10 per cent of the respondents and 73.30 per cent of the respondents stated that inadequate transport facilities was faced by them, More than half of the respondents (53.30%) considered lack of marketing channel as the constraint followed by 51.60 per cent of the respondents who stated that fluctuation in price of the produce grown as their constraint and 45.80 per cent of the respondents stated that poor economic status was their constraint. Incidence of pests and diseases was reported by 44.10 per cent of the respondents and 35.00 per cent of the respondents stated low yield due to climate change as their constraint. Lack of awareness on Government schemes and policies as the constraint stated by 26.60 per cent of the respondents.

Suggesting Suitable Strategies for Better crop Diversification

Further attempts were made to elucidate suggestions regarding to suitable strategies for better crop diversification. The details of the suggestions reported by the diversified growers were collected, analyzed and ranked based on percentage and arranged in the table.

Table 2: Suggestions to Overcome Constraints in Crop Diversification

S. No	Suggestions	Number*	Percentage	Rank
1.	Minimum support price should be ensured for all the agricultural commodities	106	88.30	I
2.	Providing fixed price for the agricultural commodities based on cost of production	98	81.60	II
3.	Proper marketing channels should be made available to farmers	90	75.00	III
4.	Exclusion of middle man intervention in marketing	87	72.50	IV
5.	Government should provide proper transport facilities for easy marketing	78	65.00	V
6.	Timely availability of the credit facilities to the farmers	66	55.00	VI
7.	To increase the awareness of crop diversification, appropriate extension strategy should be used	47	39.10	VII
8.	Training should be provided to promote crop diversification	35	29.10	VIII

*-Multiple responses

It could be seen from the table that the majority of the respondents (88.30 per cent) suggested that ensuring minimum support price to all agricultural commodities as their suitable strategy for better crop diversification followed by 81.60 per cent of the respondents suggested that providing fixed price for the agricultural commodities based on cost of production was their suitable strategy for better crop diversification, 75.00 per cent of the respondents suggested that providing proper marketing channel to farmers was the suitable strategy for better crop diversification. 72.50 per cent of the respondents suggested that exclusion of middle man intervention in marketing was the suitable strategy for better crop diversification.

65.00 per cent of the respondents suggested that government should provide proper transport facilities for easy marketing, 55.00 per cent of the respondents suggested that timely availability of credit facilities to the farmers as their suitable strategy for better crop diversification. 39.10 per cent of the respondents suggested that in order to increase the awareness of crop diversification, appropriate extension strategy should be used, 29.10 per cent of the respondents stated that providing training to the farmers to promote crop diversification as their suitable strategy for better crop diversification.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper examined the constraints of crop diversification in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu and also enumerates the suggestions to overcome the constraints using primary data collected. Constraints always play a significant role and it prevents farmers from practicing crop diversification. It was found that middle man's intervention was their major constraint in practicing crop diversification and they suggested that ensuring minimum support price for all the agricultural commodities would be a suitable strategy for better crop diversification. Providing credit/subsidy facilities to the farmers and timely availability of inputs would encourage them to practice crop diversification. Hence, Government should take measure to create awareness among farmers to practice crop diversification.

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